Adults of the Horse Chestnut *Pachycnemia hippocastanaria* (Hb.) (Lepidoptera: Geometridae) occur throughout the year on the Purbeck heaths, Dorset – On reading through the details of the emergence times of *Pachycnemia hippocastanaria* (Hb.) (Horse Chestnut) in the excellent recently published field guide of Waring and Townsend (2003), I was surprised to find that they still give the main emergence periods as April/May and August, with just a passing mention to 'odd records from January and November'. This was certainly not my experience when I operated a Rothamsted Light Trap (200 W Tungsten bulb) nightly for six years during 1971–1976. The trap was located in open mature lowland heath on the RSPB's Arne Nature Reserve, which is situated on a peninsula on the western side of Poole Harbour, Dorset.

I recently located copies of my Rothamsted trap data and find that other than for the occasional bulb failure, the light trap was run continuously between 1.i.1971 and 31.xii.1976. The trap was placed in a shallow valley of open mature dry heath on the southern edge of Arne Heath (map reference SY 98 970877). The vegetation was dominated by mature *Calluna vulgaris* (L.) (Ling), with some *Erica cinerea* L. (Bell Heather). There was also a little *Pteridium aqulinum* (L.) (Bracken), a scattering of *Betula pendula* Roth (Silver Birch), some at least 20 years old and to the south and southwest of the trap 50 m away were a few mature *Pinus sylvestris* L. (Scots Pine) and *P. pinaster* Aiton (Maritime Pine) but mostly <15 year old invading Scots Pine and bushes of *Rhododendron ponticum* L. (Rhododendron). The trap was deliberately located to catch primarily lowland heath species.

The catches of *P. hippocastanaria* are given in Table 1, together with the number of months that it was recorded during the six years. In the period October–January a total of 19 insects was caught, with the exception of two on 8.x.1971, all were single individuals. There were no February records during 1971–1973 but in the next three years it was recorded in small numbers (1–12) scattered through the month, with an exceptional catch of 56 on 26.ii.1976. During March, there was an increase of records spread through the month, usually of 1–8 individuals but 16 on 3.iii.1976.

Table 1. The occurrence of *Pachycnemia hippocastanaria* (Horse Chestnut) during 1971–1976 from a Rothamsted light trap located on lowland heath at Arne Nature Reserve, Dorset.

Month	No. of years occurred	Total no. of nights recorded	Total number recorded	Range of catch size	6 year monthly mean
January	5	7	7	1	1.2
February	3	18	105	1–56	17.5
March	6	23	97	1–16	16.2
April	6	42	156	1–18	26.0
May	5	20	26	1–6	4.3
June	6	29	62	1–23	10.3
July	6	124	1096	1–70	182.7
August	6	114	582	1–39	97.0
September	5	25	72	1–12	12.0
October	3	4	5	1–2	0.8
November	3	4	4	1	0.7
December	2	3	3	1	0.5

I raise the matter of 'early and late' emergence with reference to the on-going discussions concerning climate change and global warming. These so-called 'early and late' emergences would appear to be of normal occurrence 40 years ago on the Purbeck heaths. Might the apparent dearth of records be as a result of lepidopterists not running light traps on open lowland heath between January–March and November–December? Because of this, the small but regular emergence in these months on these southern heaths has gone unnoticed. The value of the Rothamsted trap, if placed in a particular habitat, is that the catch can be generally associated with the general environs of the trap site. This trap was sited on open heath that would have been contiguous with over 250 ha of lowland heath. From the data presented it would suggest that at least on the Purbeck heaths, *P. hippocastanaria* occurs throughout the year but in small numbers during the winter months. It is interesting to note from the Rothamsted Insect Survey trap at Yarner Wood, Devon, which borders heathland, that this species was recorded regularly during 1992 from mid-March onward (Riley, 1993).

If these records were associated with the current time, we would probably be suggesting that this could be an effect of milder winters, which we are now experiencing in south Dorset. However, the records presented refer to the early 1970s, when winters were colder, with regular hard frosts and some snow were the norm.

The data would also suggest that the main time for emergence in this part of the country for the first brood is February to April, and for the second brood from July to August.

References

Riley, A. (1993). Important Lepidoptera records from the Rothamsted Insect Survey national light-trap network. *Entomologist's Gazette* **44**: 173–177.

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Bryan P. Pickess,
8 Shaw Drive, Sandford, Wareham, Dorset BH20 7BT

An ant's home is its castle: further notes on the synanthropy of *Lasius brunneus* (Latr.) (Hymenoptera: Formicidae)–Over Christmas 2003 I visited Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire, where Castle Director Elizabeth Halls mentioned that they had ants in the roof timbers within the Great Hall. They had been brought down with debris throughout the summer for at least the previous two years when the cleaners had swept one of the stone corbels. Being rather intrigued by the idea of ants nesting in wooden timbers 16 feet up inside a 13th century room, I requested that some of these ants be collected when they were next found.

In mid-May 2004, I discovered a jar of sawdust from the Castle on my desk. The sawdust contained a number of dead ants and they were identified as *Lasius brunneus* (Latrielle). This species is very abundant at Whitcliff Deer Park nearby, where it inhabits its more usual habitat of tree trunks. Here I have confirmed it from *Quercus robur* L., *Aesculus hippocastanum* L. and *Crataegus monogyna* Jacq., and have also seen it on *Malus domestica* Borkh. elsewhere.

Jones (2003) notes that this species had been found raiding a tin of biscuits, though they may have originated from outside. Attewell (2004) reports four